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# A STANDARD OF ART MEASUREMENT

## PART I

### CONCEPTION IN ART

By F. WELLINGTON RUCKSTUHL

IN his "Philosophy of Art," a collection of lectures delivered at the École des Beaux Arts at Paris, Taine opens thus his chapter on "Kinds and Degrees of the Ideal": "Among the ideas that artists express in their works are there some that are superior to others? Can one indicate one characteristic that is worth more than another? Is there for each object an ideal form, outside of which all must be deviation or error? Can one discover a principle of subordination which assigns different ranks to different works of art?"

"At first view, one is tempted to say no; the definition of art that we have found seems to bar the route to such a research; it leads us to believe that works of art are all on the same level, and that the field is open to arbitrary judgment. . . . Yet, nevertheless, in the imaginary world, as well as in the real world, there are different ranks, because there are different values. The public and the connoisseurs assign their ranks to some and estimate the value of others. We have done nothing else during the last five years, in our survey of the schools of Italy, of the Low Countries and of Greece. We have always, and at each step, passed judgment. Without knowing it, we had in our hand *an instrument for measuring*. Other men do as we are doing, and in criticism, as elsewhere, *there are certain settled rules. (Italics are mine.)*

"Every one recognizes to-day that certain poets, like Dante and Shakespeare, certain composers like Mozart and Beethoven occupy the highest place in their art. We accord it to Goethe among all the writers of our century. Among the Flemish no one disputes the place of Rubens; among the Dutch none questions the place of Rembrandt; among the Germans that of Dürer, and among the Venetians that of Titian are not challenged. Three artists of the Italian Renaissance: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael rise, by unanimous consent, above all the others."

And Charles Dudley Warner said in his "Fashions in Literature": "If there is a standard of literary excellence—as there is of all beauty—and it seems to me that to doubt this in the intellectual world is to doubt the prevalence of order that exists in the natural—it is certainly possible to ascertain whether a new production conforms, and how far it conforms, to the universally accepted canons of art."

"To work by this rule in literary criticism is to substitute something definite for the individual taste, moods and local bias of a critic. It is true that the vast body of that which we read is ephemeral and justifies its existence by its obvious use for information, recreation and entertainment. But to permit the impression to prevail that an unenlightened, popular preference for a book, however many may hold it, is to be taken as a measure of its excellence, is like claiming that a debased Austrian coin, because it circulates, is as good as a gold stater of Alexander. The case is infinitely worse than this; for slovenly literature, unrebuked and uncor-

rected, begets slovenly thoughts and debases our entire intellectual life."

As this book by Mr. Warner was published with a preface by so careful a writer as H. W. Mabie, in which he approves Warner's position, I feel safe in saying: It is possible to give a MEASURE or YARD-STICK, to speak plainly, by means of which any cultured layman can, after more or less study, assign to any work of art its proper rank in the category of Art. I shall attempt to give such a yard-stick or standard in the following formula:—The highest Standard of Art Valuation is: POWER OF EXPRESSION; and the elements of art expression are Six: CONCEPTION, COMPOSITION, EXPRESSION, DRAWING, COLOR, TECHNIQUE; and that is the Greatest work of art, in which these six elements of expression are displayed in the highest degree.

Some artist might say I should add a Seventh element, "Style." I reject this because all great works of art have style, at least of a Universal or Impersonal kind. An excessively marked "personal" style is always a sign either of Undevelopment—before the high-water mark of perfection has been reached, or of Degeneracy—after the mark of perfection has been passed in the evolution of any artist or school or epoch. Mantegna had a personal style—due to imperfection and undevelopment; while Bandinelli had already inaugurated the Decadence of the Renaissance by his strongly marked personal style—due to overdevelopment.

Now, when we contemplate a work of art the first thing we should do is to estimate the social importance and beneficence of the Subject chosen. I rate all art subjects in the following order of their social importance and nobility: Religious, Ethical, Allegorical, Historical, Important Portraits, Genre or Contemporary Life, Landscapes and Marines, Still Life. For it is evident that the effect of the operation upon society of the spirit and form of Michelangelo's "Creation" is far more potent and beneficent than the operation of a "Dutch Tap Room Scene" by Teniers.

Having decided on the social value of the subject of the work of art, the next thing we should do is to decide whether the *conception* of the subject is high or low, commonplace or original, beautiful or ugly, weak or forceful.

Let us consider the first and highest element of art power: Conception.

As I said before, it makes no difference how poor the craftsmanship of any work of art: it is always a work of art. But no work of art can enter the category of Great Art at all unless its "technique," its finger-workmanship is of a high order. An artist aiming at enduring Fame—as he should—must first of all be a good workman before daring to talk, preach or rhapsodize in art. Before this first-class workmanship is arrived at, his drawing, modeling, values and surface manipulation—personal or impersonal—must be of a high order of truth and of relative exactitude to nature. When, in his school

of training, the artist has acquired sufficient command of the grammar, syntax and laws of the Art-Language in which he proposes to talk to mankind, to amuse, to delight or to inspire it; when he is a first-class workman, then the element of the *conception* of a subject becomes of the first concern, as the most important in a work of art.

At the outset I will note: all art is Decorative. That is to say: It ornaments or decorates the object or person or space to which it is applied. And all art is also Expressive, either of an idea or of the temperament of the artist or of the spirit of the epoch in which he worked. But as some works are made purely to ornament something and others purely to express an idea, all art may broadly be divided into two great categories—Decorative and Expressive art.

Let us deal with expressive art alone, that in which ideas, sentiments, stories, etc., are expressed. Let us say the subject chosen for representation by a number of artists is "The Last Supper." How shall the artist conceive the subject, its character, its tone, its expression?

First comes the question of Originality of conception. Because those deepest laws of our nature "The Desire to Persist" and "The Desire for the Better" require Change, Novelty and Freshness. It is this need of change which is at the base of all human progress. It results from the capacity of men for getting tired of even the most perfect things of their time, if forced to live with those things only and always, without ever coming in contact with new things, whether superior or inferior, to serve as a contrast and point a comparison. Therefore, originality of conception is the first important thing to be considered in works of art. Everything else being equal, that is the greatest work of art which is the most original. This is fundamental.

But, while originality is the first thing to be considered in the conception of a work of art, the ultimate and most important thing in the conception is not originality—but Beauty.

This is what the "modernist" in art—your "individualist" *à l'outrance*—cannot understand or refuses to sanction.

It is true, as Rollin Lynd Hartt says in "The People at Play": "The people crave three things: a chance to wonder, a chance to shudder and a chance to be scared out of their wits." But while this is true they do not want the shocks except for the purpose of varying the, generally preferred, monotony of their lives; the stability of which requires prolonged periods of placidity as far as it is possible to establish them. Your rabid "modernist" artist and critic, knowing the need of these occasional shocks and of originality—which is always a shock—stupidly imagines that people want such shocks all the time and at all hazard; and that the uglier and more disgusting these shocks, this originality may be, especially in art, the more they will be appreciated!

Therein lies the fundamental error of the whole "modernist" movement, and is the basic cause of the ocean of art-trash which has been inflicted upon a disgusted public during the last generation. This modernist craze for originality came at the end of the greatest and most productive art epoch that France or the world has seen since the Renaissance, an epoch at the end of which people saw so many

masterpieces of art that they became tired of perfect and beautiful work and, for a change, tolerated imperfect and ugly things—just as most men, after a long period of abstinence and goodness, crave a cup of indulgence and a dash of wickedness. This same thing occurred soon after the Perikleian period in Greece and after the Renaissance in Italy.

What the human soul really thirsts for is not so much originality as—Beauty. If to Beauty is added Originality, so much the better. But above all we must have Beauty. And the artist or epoch in art which forgets this fundamental law is in full decadence.

There have been epochs in which originality of all sorts was under a ban. Lombroso in his book on "Genius" gives many instances going to prove that men of genius, in their old age, become particularly resentful of the new, while, in their youth, they may have been revolutionary opponents of the old. This senescence is not only true of individuals but of the race as a whole. There are certain epochs in which the majority of men think that the world is of age, and that nothing better than what then exists can be imagined. This was true of the *ancien régime* in France, in which an effort was made for a stable and durable perfection when, as Mr. Irving Babbitt, in his "On Being Original," says: "Social custom so entwined itself about the whole nature of Frenchmen of the old *régime* that it finally became almost as hard for him as we may suppose it is for a Chinaman to disengage his originality from the coils of custom. The very word 'original' was often used as a term of ridicule and disparagement. . . . 'When it is desired to turn any one to ridicule' writes Boursault about this same time 'he is said to be an *original sans copie*.' Anything in literature or art that departed from the conventional type was pronounced 'monstrous.' La Harpe applies this epithet to the Divine Comedy and points out how inferior the occasional felicities of this 'absurd and shapeless rhapsody' are to the correct beauties of a true epic like Voltaire's 'Henriade.'"

When such a conventionalizing into fossilism comes to a head, then a Revolution announces itself, such as the French Revolution of 1793 in government, and the Romantic Revolution of 1830 in art. Let us not, therefore, join the class whose brain-fibre and soul-structure becomes semi-fossilized. Let us welcome the new and original. But let us be reasonably sure that we are welcoming something that is truly original and not crazy before we give way to the onslaught of those who imagine they are original when, in reality, they are only bizarre and ugly.

It is true, as Mr. Babbitt says: "The attempt of the neo-Classicists to tyrannize over originality and restrict the creative impulse in the name of the type was bound, in the long run, to provoke a reaction."

It did bring the reaction. But have we not gone too far in the other direction? I think we have. I agree entirely with J. A. Symonds when he says: "It may be added that the liberal culture of the sort described goes far toward emancipating men from the vanity which aims at originality in and out of season. . . . For it is better to repeat all things, if true, than to improvise new things, if they are not true" (or not beautiful). In short, one truly

beautiful thing in art, however conventional, is worth a cargo of ugly things, however original.

The Modernists who have ushered in the decadence of European art forget that to be original in art is easy; but to be *original and fine* is difficult and rare indeed! Especially is this true of marked originality. For fundamentally every work of art, like every human being, no matter how apparently conventional, is truly original; nature has taken care of that.

Let me repeat: while it is very easy to be original it is difficult to be original—and fine! Why is this? Mr. Babbitt gives us the reason: "Genuine originality is so immensely difficult, because it imposes the task of achieving work that is of general human truth and at the same time intensely individual. Perhaps the best examples of this union of qualities are found in Greek art. The original man for the Greek was the one who could create in the very act of imitating the past. Greek literature at its best is to a remarkable degree a creative imitation of Homer." In fine, originality is extremely difficult to achieve; it is extremely rare; it never comes by striving for it, but as a gift from nature, and comes unsought. It is never entirely detached from the past; it is a combination of the original and the commonplace, of the Personal and Impersonal, of the Individual and Universal.

Extreme originality, however desirable it may be, is not necessary to make a work of art great.

While the originality of a work of art must be taken into consideration in the judging or the creating thereof, it is of secondary importance to the beautiful, be this beauty Picturesque, Graceful or Sublime; this beauty finally resulting not from any one art element but from all the elements involved.

The second element to be considered in the Conception of a great work of art is: The *beneficent character* of the idea, story or subject of the conception. That is: not only should the subject be a noble one, but its tone of execution from expression to technique should be noble also. The so-called modernist artists, occupied solely with their absurd little technical artistic dodgers, which they throw off with a hop, skip and a jump, ridicule the idea, not only of a noble subject, but of any subject at all in a work of art. Whistler was one of these. In "The Red Rag" he says: "Why should not I call my works 'symphonies,' 'arrangements,' 'harmonies,' 'nocturnes'?" I know that many good people think my nomenclature funny and myself 'eccentric'—yes, 'eccentric' is the adjective they find for me.

"My picture of a 'harmony in grey and gold' is an illustration of my meaning. It is a snow scene with a single black figure and a lighted tavern. I care nothing for the past, present or future of the black figure, placed there because the black was wanted at that spot. All that I know is that my combination of grey and gold is the basis of my picture. Now this is precisely what my friends cannot grasp."

Had Whistler stopped here it would have been well—or said something like this: "I do not care what people say about my theories or my work; it may be only clever color-juggling and trivial in purpose; but it is my own stuff and the only kind I can produce and it pleases me to produce it. I leave it as it is to posterity, to judge me and my work." But when he waves the "Red Rag" and says: "The

vast majority of English folk cannot and will not consider a picture as a picture, apart from any story which it may be supposed to tell. . . . As Music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight, and the subject matter has nothing to do with harmony of sound or of color"—when he says this he gets on dangerous ground. This shifty sentence may be approved when applied to a mere Decorative panel, but it is utterly false and deceiving when applied to an Expressive work of art. This is bad enough, as it asserts that "technique" and mere "painting" is always art—is alone art—instead of being only one side of it.

But when he goes further and reels off the following he becomes grotesque: "Art should be independent of all clap-trap, should stand alone and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotion entirely foreign to it—as devotion, pity, love, patriotism and the like. All these have no kind of concern with it, and that is why I insist on calling my work 'arrangements' and 'harmonies'." This is indeed the veriest clap-trap of a charlatan bent on making a market for his own wares by humbugging people with fine ambiguous phrases, whose sophistry they cannot stop to analyze.

Were these only the fugitive exclamations of stray, disgruntled hours, one would say nothing. But in his lecture "Ten O'clock," a serious, self-defending lecture, and propaganda of his art philosophy—serious, though in a form full of cynical wit—he says in speaking of Tintoretto, Veronese and Velasquez: "No reformers were these great men, no improvers of the ways of others. . . . In all this their world was completely severed from that of their fellow-creatures with whom sentiment is mistaken for poetry and for whom there is no perfect work that cannot be explained by the benefit conferred on themselves.

"Humanity takes the place of art, and God's creations are excused by their usefulness.

"Hence it is that nobility of action in this light is hopelessly linked with the merit of the work that portrays it. . . . So we have come to hear of the painting that elevates and of the duty of the painter—of the picture that is full of thought and of the panel that merely decorates."

From this it is evident that it never dawned on Whistler that it is fine thought alone that lifts human craftsmanship into the domain of truly great art.

George Moore—also one of the high priests of modernism—says: "Les Palais Nomades" is a really beautiful book and it is free from all the faults that make an absolute and supreme enjoyment of great poetry an impossibility. For it is in the first place free from those pests and parasites of artistic works—ideas. . . . Gustave Kahn took counsel of the past, and he has successfully avoided everything that even a hostile critic might be tempted to term an idea, and for this I am grateful."

We can pardon the absurd point of view of this literary mountebank when we reflect that on page 27 of his book "The Confessions of a Young Man" he confessed: "I was not dissipated but I loved the abnormal."

All this would not be so serious if this philosophy had not made great headway in our own America.

In a recent New York paper appeared the follow-

ing: "The death of Jean Georges Vibert the French painter terminated a career illustrating to perfection the vogue which a purely literary manifestation in art may sometimes obtain. It is possible that in his youth, or for that matter even in his maturity, Vibert may have wished to achieve work in which the *painter's painting* would win the applause of his fellows. It is never safe to assume that the merely popular artist has never had a kindling emotion or a high ambition (*sic*). But so far as we know Vibert was content all his life long to produce painted anecdotes in which the anecdote was always the main thing."

In the first place this phrase ends with an untruth. In Vibert's pictures the anecdote was not always the main thing. For nearly all of his pictures show internal evidence that he strove always to paint as well as the best painters on earth. He always made a great effort to reach the highest watermark of merely skilled craftsmanship; and that he often reached this, close to the best of the world, is sure. When he did not it was because he could not. Certainly for fine drawing, true values and a complete expression of thought some of his works are marvelous. He had the true artist's eye to express some fine or interesting or comic thought with the utmost possible technical power and ever in the modern realistic feeling. That the great public bought many of his works and the price of them is constantly rising is a proof of his sincerity.

But how childish to speak of the "high ambition," to please the artists, when scarcely two artists think alike and most of them are jealous of the technical skill of their fellows, also in view of the obvious fact to-day that if a man pushes his individuality to an extreme he will have a vogue only for a few years and then be a back number! Do you suppose Homer ever thought of writing "poet's poetry" or Shakespeare "Dramatist's Drama," or Beethoven "Musicians' Music" just to dazzle a few "fellow-artists"? Did they not rather try to conquer immortality by enthraling a world?

To offset these gibes, made by clever jugglers in paint against those who insist on ideas, thoughts and sentiment in art, let me quote mostly from the great French writers of the past centuries. Said Diderot: "Every piece of sculpture or painting should be the expression of a great maxim, a lesson for the spectator; without this it is mute." In the preface to Renan's "Morals and Criticism," page XVIII, we find the following: "All the refinements of the world are not worth one good sentiment, even if badly expressed." But the vaudevillians may say: "Diderot was brilliant and erratic and must have been in a cloud when he talked as above; and Renan was an ex-priest and a professional moralist."

So then, let us go to a scientific critic, Taine. He says: "To this scale of physical values corresponds, step by step, a scale of plastic values. Everything else being equal, according as the character handled in a painting or a statue is more or less important, that painting or that statue is more or less beautiful."

The concordance is therefore complete, and the characters (types) bring with themselves into a work of art the value which they have already in nature; according as they possess, in themselves, a value more or less great, they communicate to the work a value more or less great. . . . We now understand why the hierarchy of art repeats their

hierarchy. At the summit of nature are the sovereign powers which master the others; at the summit of art are the masterpieces which surpass the others; the two tops are on a level and the sovereign powers of nature are expressed by the masterpieces of art. . . . We have considered types according as they are more or less important; we are now going to consider those types according to their being more or less beneficent. . . . Let us begin with moral man and with the work of art by which he is expressed. It is manifest that the characteristics by which he is endowed are more or less beneficent or maleficent or mixed. . . . We must now see this man in his group. What is the disposition which renders his life beneficent for the society in which he is comprised? We know the interior faculties which are useful to him; where is the interior spring which will render him useful to others.

"There is one which is unique: it is the faculty of loving; for to love is to have for one's aim the happiness of another, to subordinate one's self to him, to work and to devote oneself to his good. You will recognize there the beneficent type par excellence; it is visibly the highest of all in the scale we are constructing. . . . Such is the double scale by which are classified, at once the types of things and the values of works of art. According as the types are more important or beneficent, they occupy a higher place, and put into a higher rank the works of art by which they are expressed."

But lest these festive modernists should say: Taine is already *vieux jeu*, let us come down to a later date. Is Arsène Alexandre the "Boulevardier" sufficiently "modern" for our vaudevillians? And is the *Figaro* of Paris sufficiently cynical and *demi-mondain* to satisfy our "up to daters"—since it is not in the class of "hysterical moral forces" of the world?

Well in the *Figaro* of April 30th, 1908 we find a notice of the Salon des Champs Elysées by Alexandre. It is headed "Ideas and Works of Art" and runs: "This year the Société des Artistes Français has replaced ideas by a whitewashing of its walls with a new tone and works of art are replaced by carpets in all its halls. It is neither through a spirit of chagrin nor of malevolence that we make this statement. We do not find any pleasure in making it, while, on the contrary, it would be a joy to be able to become enthusiastic over some noble ideas, to acclaim some great works truly new. But how can the critic feel enthusiasm when the artists either seem to be fatigued or ashamed to express ideas? Why should we play the rôle of deceivers or make the public play that rôle in taking for works of art a lot of things that are mere journeyman productions?"

"We regret, therefore, to say that the Salon is poor in beautiful works and extremely poor in beautiful ideas. Can we attribute this to lassitude? Surely not. Never were there more painters nor more people knowing how to 'paint' well, in the literal sense of the word, if not with great refinement. But also never, it seems, did there exist a greater laziness of thought among artists, answering perhaps to a laziness of taste in the public. They are satisfied with the first spectacle that they meet and they reproduce it with a sort of neutral

cleverness. And those who do not imitate the others repeat themselves.

"We must therefore conclude that because of their living in their studios and not in their brains or hearts, because of despising—and why?—pure thoughts and living emotions, which alone will always be, whatever may be said to the contrary, the inspirers of truly beautiful works of art, the artists, retaining a prestige poorly justified, have become for the most part not carriers of light but traders of images—and even a small number of images and always the same. Skepticism—that which the old education called 'human respect'—has killed or bridled in most of them their lofty flights, until they have fallen into great errors. The necessities of living, which is besides badly understood, have killed this beautiful profession.

"And we have arrived at this point, that the painters of to-day are, above all, people who fail to grasp the possibilities of all the good opportunities. They have a chance of decorating public edifices, and that for a society which will renew itself; and they acquit themselves of this task by spreading in a commonplace language a lot of conventions—not even traditions—which mean absolutely nothing!

"And beyond that? They have the chance of being able to seize a scene and to relate it with means far more striking and far more complete than mere words. They have this exceptional fortune, not possessed by either the poet or the musician or any one, of being able to suggest by a few spots all the enchantment and intoxication which light and air can give! And they offer what? Always the same Spaniards, always the same markets of Brittany, always the same Fishermen of the studio, always the same landscapes, repeated after the same models, patented and medaled. Does this not spell the decadence of art?"

As the *Figaro* is a paper supporting the Aristocracy and the Academy, the modern scoffers at ideas may say that Alexandre is nothing but a newspaper critic, prejudiced against the modern philosophy of "individualism" in art. So let me finally quote again from Véron, who made a bitter fight against the fossilism of the old Academic Art of his day, one who may be said to be the real father of modern Individualism in æsthetics, and the best friend that mere "technicians" ever had. Says he, among other things: "From this point of view, the choice of a subject is far from being so much a matter of indifference as a certain number of critics affect to believe. The choice of a subject that an artist makes enables us at least to judge of the force of his intellectual power, which is already a matter of importance, if it is true, as we believe, that the value of the work of art depends in a large degree on this: that it reveals the personality of the artist.

"You must even admit that, through the just reaction against the ratiocinative and literary criticism, which has always been dominant with us since Diderot, and which often considers in a work of art less the truly artistic qualities than the extrinsic merits of the subject and the composition, we have arrived at an advertisement of a superb disdain for all sides of art which demand the intervention of reason and reflexion. The painter makes a glory of despising all that is not purely pictorial—line and color!—all the rest is worthless!

"It is an error or at least a dangerous exaggeration. It has ruined a good number of artists who, in virtue of this fine theory, concluded that genius consisted in separating oneself from reason, seeing that reason is not a faculty specially artistic, artists who, in consequence, decided to be guided only by their fantasy. . . . Since painting consists essentially in the use of lines and color, it is altogether natural that all subjects should present themselves to the imagination of the painter under the appearance of lines and colors; we may even say that, if he is a painter, it is precisely because he has a mind made in such a fashion that things do appear to him under this aspect, and it is because of this that they strike him and appeal to him.

"Shall we say, however, that, looked at thus, there could be nothing else? Those lines and colors, must they be so empty of thought and ideas that it would be impossible for other men to discover something else? That is an exaggeration against which we must protect ourselves.

"In spite of a few illustrious exceptions like those which I have mentioned, who were able to make up for their defects in ideas by a prodigious virtuosity, it remains nevertheless true that the doctrine of Art for Art's Sake applied to painting and music produces results necessarily inferior to those which presuppose the intervention of the intelligence. And what we have said before contains the explanation of this inferiority."

I could bring many more quotations from old and young, dead and living Frenchmen, to prove that in France the best thinkers, and those who have French welfare at heart, not only do not teach that ideas and lofty sentiments are out of date and undesirable in art, but that on the contrary ideas and emotion of a noble order are really all that make Art great and respectable. Why then do the charlatans, both in and out of France, spread about their idiotic calumnies on France? Because, being unable to handle a great subject on account of their empty brains and submerged souls, they inwardly feel that they are not great men or great artists; having been born small song-and-dance men, clever alone with fingers and feet, and consumed with a vanity that drives them to try to paint or sculpt or versify when they ought to be selling thread or farming, they needs must, with charlatan impertinence, decry that which is truly great, in order to humbug the busy public into believing that their "clever" stuff is the only thing in art worth honoring or purchasing. It is—Business!

That is why the public is filled with lassitude as Arsène Alexandre says, and that is why no truly great art or very little is being produced in France or Europe to-day.

It is only the vast importance of this subject which has allured me to dwell upon it so much and perhaps repeat myself here. But to conclude this line of argument—I will quote what John C. Van Dyke says in his "Art for Art's Sake": "Yes, there is a third, a higher quality of painting. For poetic feeling is as wide as poetry itself and may be lyrical, sentimental, epic or sublime. There are grades and degrees of poetical conception, rising from mediocrity to lofty heights; and, as the painter's observation is dull or keen, as his feeling is indifferent or passionate, as his mental capacity and imaginative powers are weak or strong, so may his

art be of a commonplace nature or of that kind which breathes the mystery and awe of prophetic things from the vault of the Sixtine."

The betterment of man, the progress of civilization is just as much in need to-day of the help the great artists can give it to destroy selfishness, cruelty, vulgarity and undermining bestiality—which always follows in the wake of an excessive individualism—as it ever was. If art need be no longer an engine of the church, it can be an engine of modern society. This modern society is now only in a state of becoming. But it will soon be born into a definite shape with a definite aim and then the leaders will again need art as an engine, as a lever, as the church still uses it to raise life onto an ever higher plane. Then the present art-for-art's-sake artist, now devoid of faith in the wonderful future of man, satisfied now to putter about in the barnyard of art, will once again use his talent—not to serve any art sect or narrow church—but Humanity itself!

The third important element in the conception of a subject is—Expressive Force. That is to say:

Shall the work be powerfully and dramatically expressive or merely mildly and decoratively expressive?

For example: "The Last Supper" painted by Raphael is the least expressive of the possibilities of the subject, the least dramatic, the least stirring of the emotions; Ghirlandajo's is more expressive; Tintoretto's still more; Del Sarto's still more; and Leonardo's most of all, and makes all the others take a lower rank—in Force of Expression.

Now, these three elements of the way of conceiving of a subject—Originality, Beneficence of Character and Expressive Force must be considered at the very beginning of the artist's travail in his effort to produce a great work of art on a given subject. And upon this depends the measure of his success—assuming that he has perfect command of the means of artistic expression.

When he has those three elements determined upon, he begins the real labor of expressing his subject—by means of Composition, Expression, Drawing, Color and Technique.

I will treat of composition in my next article.

*F. W. Ruckstuhl*

## THE PRAYER OF THE WOMEN

Mary of Sorrows and Mother of Tears,  
By the Cross on Calvary,  
By the thong, and the thorn, and the Roman spears,  
Pray to the wounded Christ who hears—  
Pray for the women of all the years  
Who crossed Gethsemane!

Mary of Mercy and Mother of Pain,  
When you tell your rosary,  
There are beads for the souls of the brave men slain,  
Beads for the crime of kings and Cain,  
Beads for the women who wept in vain,  
Impotent agony!

Mary of Heaven and Mother of God,  
When the world is shadowy  
With the weft of the night o'er the bloody sod,  
You, who have bowed beneath the Rod,  
Pity the women whose feet have trod  
The path to Calvary!

*Kadra Maysi*

